

**SUFFIELD ZONING AND PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
October 21, 2013**

Present: Frank Ravenola, Secretary
Chester Kuras, Vice Chairman
Ellie Binns
Charles Sheehan
John Murphy
Mark Winne, Alternate

Absent: Frank E. Bauchiero, Jr., Chairman
Mark O'Hara, Alternate
Gina Pastula, Alternate

Also Present: Bill Hawkins, AICP, Town Planner
Gerry Turbet, Town Engineer
Jim Taylor, Zoning Enforcement Officer

The proceedings of this meeting were voice recorded.

I. ROLL CALL

Vice Chairman Kuras called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm and then asked Mr. Hawkins to take a silent roll call. In the absence of one regular member, Mr. Kuras appointed Mr. Winne as the alternate voting member. For the record, Secretary Ravenola read aloud the legal notice that was published in the Hartford Courant on October 10, 2013 and October 17, 2013.

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

File #2013-13: Request from Kathleen Mormino for a text amendment to three (3) sections of the Suffield Zoning Regulations. Add "Hobby Farm" definition to Section II – Definitions; Amend Section IV(B)-Use Table to add "Hobby Farm"; Amend Section IV (D)(2)(b)- Residential Zone, Permitted Uses to add "Hobby Farm".

Representing the applicant, Attorney Scott Lingenfelter introduced the revised text amendment and described the changes that have been made to the proposal. Mr. Lingenfelter spoke to the concerns that the Commission mentioned at the last meeting regarding the application. He further described the revised text amendments and how they propose a special permit process for hobby farms. As written, the proposed hobby farm text amendments would allow farm animals to be kept on any lot in Suffield that is less than five acres in size. Mr. Lingenfelter explained that they did not want to limit hobby farms to a specific lot size. The proposed regulation also provides a mechanism to seek recommendations and advice if there are concerns regarding site suitability or the activity on a specific site.

Joan Nichols, the Director of Member Relations and Community Outreach at the Connecticut Farm Bureau was introduced and explained what the Farm Bureau does, her role, and some background on farming in the state. Mrs. Nichols mentioned some other towns' acreage limits for farms and that the Suffield limit of five acres for a farm seems excessive. She then began to describe to the Commission what is meant by the term generally accepted agricultural practices and how those practices relate to site suitability as opposed to number of acres when it comes to growing crops or raising livestock. Mrs. Nichols told the Commission that UConn Cooperative Extension and the State Department of Agriculture are the authorities when it comes to information on generally accepted agricultural practices.

Mr. Kuras asked how the permit process would work if the Commission were to adopt the proposed text amendment. Attorney Lingenfelter responded how the process could work and also handed the Commission a draft of what a hobby farm permit could look like. A discussion took place regarding perceived problems with having no written guidelines for generally accepted agricultural practices, site suitability and that perhaps an agricultural committee, rather than staff should review the hobby farm special permit.

Mr. Sheehan asked about site plan requirements and developing some kind of criteria for the permit that the Commission can objectively judge for each applicant. Discussion followed regarding the special permit process, the need to obtain approval from the Conservation Commission, and the preference to allow chickens as a matter of right with objective criteria. Joan Nichols explained the animal density tables that were created by the UConn Cooperative Extension and that they were developed to provide some guidance for forage. Further discussion took place regarding special permits which remain on land records if the person that obtained the permit moves.

With nothing further, Mr. Kuras asked if there was anyone that wanted to speak in favor of the proposed text amendment, with none, he asked if anyone wanted to speak opposed to the proposal. They were as follows;

- Carl Stursberg, 493 South Stone Street – Cautioned the Commission about allowing roosters and that any text amendment should be limited to hens.
- Deborah Solot-Pine, 60 Plantation Drive – Asked for clarification regarding the North Central District Health Department involvement in a permit sought for a hobby farm.

With no further comments, Mr. Kuras asked for a motion to close the public hearing. Mr. Ravenola made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Sheehan. The motion was carried unanimously, 6-0-0.

File #63-2009B: Special permit renewal request for a sand and gravel pit located at Phelps Road; Map 5, Block 9, Lots 46A & 48.

Murray Phelps III was present to speak to the special permit renewal request stating that there has not been much activity at the site over the past two years. With nothing further, Mr. Kuras asked staff to read through their reports for the Commission. A discussion took place regarding the amount of material left at the site that could be excavated and if the applicant should work toward putting a closure plan together with contours indicating what the site should look like when closed to excavation. With nothing further, Mr. Kuras opened the hearing up to the public for those who wished to speak in favor of

or opposed to the application. With no comments regarding the application, Mr. Winne made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Ravenola. The motion was carried unanimously, 6-0-0.

III. NEW BUSINESS

File #2013-14: Request for a 3-lot subdivision located at 840 South Street. Map 28H, Block 37, Lot 1. Applicant- MHI Properties. Mr. Sheehan made a motion to accept File #2013-14 and set the public hearing date for November 18, 2013; seconded by Mr. Ravenola. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

File #2013-15: Request for a 4-lot subdivision located at the corner of Ratley Road and Oak Street. Map 14, Block 16, Lot 2-B. Applicant – Lisa & John Phillips. Mr. Sheehan made a motion to accept File #2013-15 and set the public hearing date for November 18, 2013; seconded by Mr. Ravenola. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

File #2013-16: Request for an 18-lot subdivision located at 839 Boston Neck Road (Redstone Farm) Map 57H, Block 51, Lot 8. Applicant - Real Dev Corp. Mr. Sheehan made a motion to accept File #2013-16 and set the public hearing date for December 16, 2013; seconded by Mr. Ravenola. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

File #2013-17: Special permit request for an 18-lot Flexible Residential Development (FRD) subdivision located at 839 Boston Neck Road (Redstone Farm). Map 57H, Block 51, Lot 8. Applicant – Real Dev Corp. Mr. Sheehan made a motion to accept File #2013-17 and set the public hearing date for December 16, 2013; seconded by Mr. Ravenola. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

Public Hearings for Files 2013-16 and 2013-17 are to be conducted concurrently.

File #2013-18: Special permit request to convert 63 High Street (First Church Parsonage) to professional offices. Map 34H, Block 30, Lot 111. Applicant – First Church of Christ. Mr. Sheehan made a motion to accept File 2013-18 and set the public hearing date for November 18, 2013; seconded by Mr. Ravenola. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

File #2013-13: Request from Kathleen Mormino for a text amendment to three (3) sections of the Suffield Zoning Regulations. Add “Hobby Farm” definition to Section II – Definitions; Amend Section IV(B)-Use Table to add “Hobby Farm”; Amend Section IV (D)(2)(b)- Residential Zone, Permitted Uses to add “Hobby Farm”.

A discussion took place regarding the notice requirements as the revised text amendment added a new section that was not previously advertised. The Commission decided that they should vote on the regulation that was properly advertised. Mr. Sheehan stated that he felt a lot of good work went into the revised amendment and credited the applicant and their representative for the work they put into the text. He further stated that the proposed text will help the Commission move forward with a text amendment. With nothing further, Mr. Winne made a motion to approve File 2013-13; seconded by Mr. Ravenola.

The motion was denied, 2-4-0 with Mrs. Binns and Mr. Kuras voting for the application and Mr. Winne, Mr. Ravenola, Mr. Murphy, and Mr. Sheehan voting against the application.

General reasons given for the denial were that the proposed amendments were devoid of objective criteria that the Commission feels would allow the proposed regulations to be applied and enforced consistently. The Commission also felt that a more narrow and objective approach to a text amendment regarding hobby farms would be in the best interest of the Town.

File #63-2009B: Special permit renewal request for a sand and gravel pit located at Phelps Road; Map 5, Block 9, Lots 46A & 48.

There was a brief discussion regarding a requirement that the owner of the gravel pit devise a plan showing the final grading of the site once it is closed. With nothing further, Mr. Sheehan made a motion to approve File #63-2009B subject to the terms and conditions in the Town Engineer's and Town Planner's reports, the conditions presently in effect, and that prior to the next renewal application in two years, that the applicant develop a closure plan for the site showing proposed final grades; seconded by Mr. Winne. Motion carried unanimously, 6-0-0.

V. REPORTS

Town Planner – Mr. Hawkins handed the Commission the regulations that used to be in place regarding accessory buildings that would allow living units for immediate family, domestic employees of the owner, or tenants of the main building who are employed on the premises. A brief discussion took place regarding why the text was taken out of the regulations in the first place. The Commission decided they would like staff to work on this regulation for incorporation into the current Zoning Regulations.

VI. MINUTES

Mr. Sheehan made a motion to approve the September 16, 2013 regular meeting minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Winne. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Sheehan made a motion to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.; seconded by Mr. Winne. Motion carried unanimously 6-0-0.

Submitted,

Francis Ravenola, Secretary

cc: Assessor, Building Official, Conservation Commission, Economic Development Director, Selectmen, Town Clerk, Town Engineer, Zoning Enforcement Officer, Commission Counsel, File